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~~THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN INDIAN-HELD KASHMIR~~

State Dept. review completed

Despite official Indian denials that the New Delhi government was involved, the ousting and reported arrest on 9 August of Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah, Revenue Minister Beg, and about 30 other officials in Indian-held Kashmir, represents an Indian attempt to regain control of a political situation that was rapidly getting out of hand.

Indian Prime Minister Nehru's 10 August statement in parliament that his government had been advising Kashmiri officials on means of stabilizing the situation indirectly gives the lie to claims that India had no foreknowledge of recent events.

Political instability in Kashmir began to develop over a year ago with a three-way cabinet split involving Abdullah, pro-Indian elements, and Communists. It apparently came to a head early in July, when Nehru was preparing to meet the Pakistani prime minister in Karachi to discuss Indo-Pakistani disputes. At that time, Nehru was unsure of his hold over Kashmir.

The press and public figures as well as government officials in both India and Kashmir have directly and indirectly accused "foreign powers," and in some instances the United States specifically, of conspiring with Sheikh Abdullah to make Kashmir an independent state.

the Indian government claims to have documentary proof of American intrigues. The alleged conspiracy has been used to explain why a shift of government became necessary. The American Embassy in New Delhi reports that Indian officials and the public are convinced of American interference in Kashmiri affairs.

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It is also possible that the "proof" was provided by Kashmiri Communists desirous of discrediting the United States. The American Embassy suggests the further possibility that the accusation was manufactured in India to provide a credible excuse for dismissing Abdullah and simultaneously warning the USSR and China to keep their hands off Kashmir. The Embassy reports the Indian belief that the United States can be blamed without fear of retaliation.

The Kashmiri security forces have demonstrated their ability to control the few, sporadic protest demonstrations that have taken place. Prime Minister Bakshi, with the additional strong Indian support being given him, should be able to deal with Sheikh Abdullah's personal following. He should also be able to silence the newly-vocal pro-Pakistani elements who have just reorganized themselves politically. He may have some trouble with the Communists unless they are quickly evicted from government positions.

Pakistan's reaction to the Indian maneuver has to date been relatively mild. Pakistani officials have emphasized that Indo-Pakistani relationships on Kashmir have not been materially changed, and the government is trying to minimize adverse public and press comment. However, Prime Minister Mohammad Ali has requested an immediate meeting with Nehru on the Kashmir question, to be held not later than 17 August. According to the Paris radio, Nehru has said he would be glad to see the Pakistani prime minister at any time but that discussion of the changes in Kashmir would be "useless," since they are strictly a matter for the Kashmiris themselves.

This answer indicates that Nehru has no intention of permitting a change in the present situation in Kashmir. He presumably hopes that by maintaining a puppet government within the state he can eventually achieve its complete accession to India.

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